

EDMONDS MOTORS BUILDING
3226 Washington Boulevard
Arlington
Virginia

HABS VA-1427
VA-1427

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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EDMONDS MOTORS BUILDING

HABS No. VA-1427

- Location: The Edmonds Motors Building is located at 3226 Washington Boulevard in the Clarendon neighborhood of Arlington, Arlington County, Virginia. It occupies a triangular lot at the eastward-bound convergence of Washington and Wilson boulevards.
- Significance: The Edmonds Motors Building is emblematic of the low-scale commercial buildings constructed in Clarendon in the first half of the twentieth century. This early genre of Arlington's commercial architecture is disappearing at an alarming clip. Clarendon is being reshaped by developers seeking to capitalize on the population density brought on by the metro corridor, who build higher and larger than before and build at a scale incongruent with the character of the surrounding neighborhoods or the Clarendon historic district itself. Buildings in the historic district are primarily made of masonry and are two stories in height.
- Description: The building is a one-story, flat roofed, concrete structure of asymmetrical massing that faces northeast of Washington Boulevard. Decorative features dating to its original use by Edmonds Motors (a Ford dealership with showroom and garage areas) consist of a horizontal band window that wrapped around the southeast corner of the building and a hexagonal showroom with plate glass windows set in metal frames. Evident along the sides of the building are the garage bays. There is also a window of glass block ¹
- Like other transportation-related structures dating from around 1930 to the mid 1950s, the Edmonds Motors Building borrowed from the economy of lines and applied ornamentation of the *Streamline Moderne* aesthetic that played to a growing obsession with aerodynamic speed. A streamlining of design for buildings servicing the automobile, such as the showrooms, tire stores, and service stations, advertised their relationship to the industry. This included forms that provided an illusion of movement, such as rounded corners and swooping lines, as well as simple motifs like horizontal grooves in lieu of a frieze that were reminiscent of speed lines. Sleek veneers and modern materials such as the steel, glass, and chrome used in the cars themselves also characterized *Streamline Moderne* structures. ²
- History: James A. Soper filed a permit for construction in February 1937 on behalf of

¹ Clarendon Historic Property Survey (CHPS No. 131), on file in the Arlington County Historic Preservation Division. At the time of the 1986 survey, the property owner was listed as the Blanche L. Souper [sic] Estate.

² For more on the *Streamline Moderne* and Arlington's automotive industry, see Laura Trieschmann, Kristyna Mizelle, and Robin Weidlich, "Al's Motors," Nomination 2003, National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service.

Edmonds Motors, Inc., the first occupants. The building was constructed by Northern Virginia Construction Company.³ Later tenants included FSC Foreign Car Service, PT Moran, Fish Grooming, and, the last, PETCO.⁴ Arlington County purchased the property in November 2006 as part of plans to widen Washington Boulevard.⁵

The property initially was part the land holdings of Peter Lattemar, who died in 1929 and left his widow Pauline his interest in the parcel. The Lattemar children, Blanche, Pauline, and Anne, would inherit it on the death of their mother in 1960.⁶ In the interim Blanche married James A. Soper, and it was her estate that was recorded as the property owner in the 1986 survey of Clarendon's architecture. Her sisters also married, Pauline to Richard Kane and Anne to Ward Miller, but it was James Soper who developed the Clarendon lots in the late 1930s. Blanche Soper's one-third interest was settled in 1993, some twenty years after she died.⁷ David and Peter Bunting transferred the property to Suzanne Moore in 1998. Not long afterwards, the county bought the tract.⁸

³ Records of the Arlington County Building Department, Building Permits, Virginia Room, Arlington County Public Library (microfilm)/ "House Numbers and Street Names" Cards, on file, Arlington County Historic Preservation Division. Permit files indicate that the parcel included lots 38, 39, 40, and 41 of Rauscher's subdivision (an addition to Clarendon). Soper was noted as the property owner on the permit application.

⁴ City directories for 1955-59 record Edmonds Motors occupancy of the building during that time. Other tenants are remembered by various patrons. PETCO was in the building by 1998-99. *Hills Arlington County (Virginia) Directory 1955* (Richmond: Hill Directory Co., Inc., 1955); *Hills Arlington County (Virginia) Directory 1957* (Richmond: Hill Directory Co., Inc., 1957); *Hills Arlington County (Virginia) Directory 1959* (Richmond: Hill Directory Co., Inc., 1959).

⁵ Arlington County Land Records, Deed Book 4045, p. 687. The County Board acquired the property from the Kane-Frey Family Trust. The real estate assessment records note the "tradenname" for the parcel as P.T. Moran Company. The County purchased part of the lots back in 1961 for an early road-widening project. See Deed Book 1459, p. 252.

⁶ Arlington County Land Records, Deed Book 1459, p. 252.

⁷ Arlington County Land Records, Deed Book 2640, p. 1034.

⁸ Arlington County Land Records, Deed Book 2888, p. 242; Arlington County Land Records, Deed Book 3652, p. 2629.